

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2781

INFO AMEMBASSY SUVA

AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR (DOTA) WASHDC

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PGOV, PDEV, EAID, PP,AS

SUB: PAPUA NEW GUINEA: SOMARE PROPOSES DECEMBER 1, 1974
AS DATE FOR PNG INDEPENDENCE,AND OTHER MATTERS.

REF: A) CANBERRA A-36

B) CANBERRA A-34

1. SUMMARY: CHIEF MINISTER SOMARE ANNOUNCED ON MARCH 12 THAT HE PROPOSED TO PUT BEFORE THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY IN APRIL THE DATE OF DECEMBER 1, 1974 FOR THE INDEPENDENCE OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA. SOMARE INDICATED HIS FIRM BELIEF THAT PNG IS READY FOR INDEPENDENCE AND THAT THE CHANGE-OVER TO INDEPENDENCE WILL BE NO MORE TRAUMATIC THAN THE NON-EVENT OF THE ARRIVAL OF SELF-GOVERNMENT IN DECEMBER 1973. BEHIND SOMARE'S ANNOUNCEMENT IS THE PREVIOUSLY ANNOUNCED AUSTRALIAN AID COMMITMENT TO PNG OF A\$500 MILLION FOR THE NEXT THREE YEARS. IN ADDITION, AUSTRALIA HAS AGREED TO PAY BETWEEN A\$25 AND A\$30 MILLION PER YEAR FOR THE PAPUA NEW GUINEA DEFENSE FORCE. THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT THAT BOTH THE PNG AND AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENTS HAVE THE TIME TO INTRODUCE AND PASS IN THEIR RESPECTIVE

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PARLIAMENTS THE LEGISLATION NEEDED FOR PNG TO BECOME

INDEPENDENT IN DECEMBER, 1974. SOMARE ALSO INDICATED THAT HE EXPECTED THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY MEETING BEGINNING IN SEPTEMBER TO APPROVE THE PROPOSED DATE FOR PNG INDEPENDENCE. END SUMMARY.

2. IN AN ANNOUNCEMENT ON MARCH 12, CHIEF MINISTER SOMARE PROPOSED TO THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY IN PORT MORESBY THE DATE OF DECEMBER 1, 1974, AS THE DATE FOR PAPUA NEW GUINEA INDEPENDENCE. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, LOUD CHEERS FROM THE HOUSE GREETED THIS PROPOSAL WHICH IS EXPECTED TO BE RAISED FOR APPORVAL IN A SPECIAL SITTING OF THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY IN APRIL. INDICATIONS ARE THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF AUSTRALIA WILL MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO MAKE IT POSSIBLE FOR PAPUA NEW GUINEA TO BECOME INDEPENDENT IN DECEMBER , IF THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY APPROVES THE SOMARE PROPOSAL. THIS WOULD INVOLVE PRIMARILY THE FURTHER AMENDMENT OF AUSTRALIA'S PAPUA NEW GUNEA ACT WHICH COULD CONCEIVABLY BE DONE IN THE AUSTRALIAN PARLIAMENT SESSION BEGINNING IN AUGUST.

3. IN SPONSORING THE DECEMBER , 1974 DATE FOR INDEPENDENCE, SOMARE STATED THAT IT WOULD BE ONE YEAR AT THAT TIME THAT PAPUA NEW GUINEA HAD BECOME SELF-GOVERNING AND WOULD ALLOW THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY TO APPROVE PAPUA NEW GUINEA INDEPENDENCE IN ITS NEXT SESSION BEGINNING IN SEPTEMBER. SOMARE ALSO STATED THERE WOULD BE AMPLE TIME FOR THE CONSITUATIONAL PLANNING COMMITTEE TO HAVE COMPLETED ITS WORK AND FOR PAPUA NEW GUINE'S "HOME-GROWN" CONSTITUTION TO HAVE BEEN DEBATED AND PASSED BY THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY. SOMARE ALSO STRESSED THAT THE RECENTLY ANNOUNCED AUSTRALIAN AID PROGRAM FOR PAPUA NEW GUINEA HAD REMOVED SOME OF THE APPREHENSION ABOUT THE VIABILITY OF THE CURRENT GOVERNMENT AMONG THE PEOPLE OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA (REF A).

4. THE CONSTITUTIONAL PLANNING COMMITTEE HAS DELAYED ITS PRESENTATION OF A DRAFT CONSITUTION UNTIL THE JUNE MEETING OF THE HOUSE. IT WAS WIDELY BELIEVED THAT THIS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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DELAY WOULD MAKE IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR PAPUA NEW GUINEA TO BECOME INDEPENDENT BY SEPTEMBER OF THIS YEAR BECAUSE OF THE DELAY IN PRESENTATION AND THE INABILITY OF THE HOUSE TO HAVE TIME TO ADEQUATELY CONSIDER THE PROPOSED NEW CONSITUATION. SOMARE STATED ABOUT THREE WEEKS AGO THAT HE WOULD BE WILLING TO LAUNCH PNG INTO INDEPENDENCE EVEN IN THE ABSENCE OF A WRITTEN CONSITUATION. HE HAS NOW, HOWEVER, INDICATED THAT SOME FORM OF

CONSITUATION WOULD APPEAR TO BE DESIRABLE BEFORE INDEPENDENCE . THERE IS CONSIDERABLE APPREHENSION PARTICULARLY AMONG THE EXPATRIATE RESIDENTS OF PNG ABOUT THE CITIZENSHIP PORTION OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL PLANNING COMMITTEE'S WORK. THE WORD IS THAT EXPATRIATES MAY HAVE TO PASS A RIGID SET OF REGULATIONS BEFORE THEY CAN QUALIFY FOR PNG CITIZENSHIP. AMONG THESE APPEAR TO BE A LONG PERIOD OF RESIDENCE IN PNG, I.E., FIVE TO SIX YEARS AND THE WILLINGNESS TO ABANDON ANY OTHER ALLEGIANCES IN FAVOR OF PNG CITIZENSHIP. TO WHAT EXTENT THE LACK OF PNG CITIZENSHIP WILL AFFECT THE WORK OF EXPATRIATES IN PNG REMAINS TO BE SEEN

5. THE AUSTRALIAN AID PROGRAM ANNOUNCED BY SOMARE ABOUT TWO WEEKS AGO APPEARS TO BE GENEROUS AND SOMEWHAT OPEN-ENDED IT PROVIDES FOR A\$500 MILLION FOR A THREE-YEAR PERIOD BEGINNING IN 1974-75. IT IS ASSUMED BY AUSTRALIAN OFFICIALS THAT THE A\$500 MILLION LEVEL IS A MINIMUM AND COULD BE EXPANDED IF SUITABLE PROJECTS AND /OR PROGRAMS ARE DEVELOPED. IN ADDITION TO THE BASIC FIGURE, THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT EXPECTS TO PROVIDE THE LION'S SHARE OF THE COST OF DEFENSE FORCES ESTIMATED AT BETWEEN A\$25 AND A\$30 MILLION PER YEAR FOR THIS THREE YEAR PERIOD. IT WAS STRESSED IN THE SOMARE ANNOUNCEMENT AND HAS BEEN REITERATED IN CANBERRA THAT THIS AID COMMITMENT IS BEING PROVIDED TO A "UNITED "PNG AND IN EFFECT STRENGTHENS SOMARE'S POLITICAL HAND. THIS AMOUNT OF AID IS ROUGHLY EQUIVALENT ON AN ANNUAL BASIS TO AUSTRALIA'S CURRENT AID TO PNG.

6. AT ABOUT THE SAME TIME , MINISTER FOR LANDS, THOMAS KAVALI, ANNOUNCED IN THE HOUSE THAT HE PROPOSES TO INTRODUCE LEGISLATION TO BUY BACK LAND FROM EXPATRIATE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OWNERS AND TO RETURN THE LAND THUS PURCHASED TO THE LOCAL TRIBES. A SMALL STEP IN THIS DIRECTION WAS TAKEN ABOUT TWO MONTHS AGO WITH THE PURCHASE OF LAND IN THE RABAU AREA FROM PLANTATION OWNERS AND GIVEN TO THE TOLAI PEOPLE. THIS PARTICULAR TRANSACTION INVOLVED THE KABAIRA PLANTATION WHERE AUSTRALIAN DISTRICT COMMISSIONER JACK EMMANUEL WAS MURDERED IN AUGUST 1972. EXPATRIATE LANDOWNERS ARE, OF COURSE, AGITATED OVER THE PROSPECT THAT THEY MAY HAVE TO SELL THEIR LAND UNDER CONDITIONS ESTABLISHED BY THE PNG GOVERNMENT. TO WHAT EXTENT THEY WILL BE ABLE TO OPPOSE OR APPEAL DETERMINATIONS UNDER THE PROPOSED NEW LAND LEGISLATION IS NOT CLEAR AT THE PRESENT TIME. KAVALI INDICATED THAT LEVEL OF COMPENSATION FOR LAND PURCHASED BY THE GOVERNMENT WOULD BE INFLUENCED BY

AMOUNT OF AUSTRLIAN AID RECEIVED.

7 WITH THE NEW CABINET RE-SHUFFLE (REF B) AND THE FOREGOING EVENTS, IT APPEARS THAT PNG IS WELL ON THE WAY TO BECOMING INDEPENDENT. THE RATIONALE FREQUENTLY USED IS THAT THE COMING OF INDEPENDENCE WILL BE NO MORE TRAUMATIC THAN THE ADVENT OF SELF -GOVERNMENT, WHEN NOTHING IN THE ORDER OF THINGS I PNG APPEARED TO CHANGE IN ANY PERCEPTIBLE WAY. IT APPEARS RELATIVELY CLEAR THAT PNG WILL BE ABLE TO HANDLE ITS OWN FOREIGN RELATIONS, AND WITH AUSTRALIAN FINANCIAL AID IT WILL BE ABLE TO MAINTAIN THE CURRENT LEVEL OF ITS DEFENSE FORCES. THESE TWO MINISTRIES ARE STILL IN THE HANDS OF THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT. IT APPEARS THAT THE EMBASSY'S PREDICTION IN APRIL, 1972, THAT THE SOMARE GOVERNMENT WOULD LEAD THE COUNTRY INTO SELF-GOVERNEMENT AND PROBABLY INTO INDEPENDENCE IS NOW ALMOST ASSURED.
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